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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004583

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SUBJECT: NINEWA: TURCOMANS IN TAL,AFAR ON KIRKUK

REFERENDUM AND KURDS

Classified By: Classified by Ninewa PRT Leader James Knight: 1.4 (B) and (D).

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) Members of the Iraqi Turcoman Front (ITF) in Tal, Afar blamed security problems on oppressed locals, in a meeting with PRT Ninewa IPAO. They also noted that the Turcomans in Tal, Afar were not represented by the district leadership, which they called &isolated8 from average citizens. The status of Kirkuk remains the focus of the ITF's concern with regard to a referendum on disputed territories as required by Article 140 of the constitution; Ninewa is not a primary source of concern for the ITF. ITF leaders also denied any official relationship with the Government of Turkey (GOT). END SUMMARY.

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INSTABILITY DUE TO OPPRESSION OF LOCALS  
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2. (C) On 7 December, PRT IPAO met with several members of the ITF in Tal, Afar. The president of the ITF, Dr. Yashar Abdulla Mahmoud, and the ITF's media affairs representative, Heydar Shih, were the most vocal of the TAP officials present.

3. (C) The meeting began with an inquiry about the effect that the Baker-Hamilton Commission report, released the day prior, would have on U.S. and Coalition presence in Iraq. Mahmoud noted that the security situation was unstable and that any precipitous withdrawal of Coalition forces would aggravate the situation. When asked who he thought was behind the recent violence in Tal, Afar, Mahmoud initially stated that &all of the terrorists are foreign fighters.8 When pressed about the origin of the fighters, Mahmoud conceded that most of the terrorists were locals, though he added the caveat that they were all oppressed locals who had no other choices. He further opined that the local prison system is serving as training ground for terrorists, as he had personally witnessed terrorist recruitment during a recent stint in prison.

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MAYOR IN TAL,AFAR NOT REPRESENTATIVE  
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4. (C) While Mahmoud said he was satisfied with the representation that his party has at the national level in

the Council of Representatives, he was very unhappy with the local mayor and district council. He noted that the mayor of Tal,Afar, Najim Abdullah Abd al-Jaburi, was neither Turcoman nor from Tal,Afar. Mahmoud insisted that Najim was completely isolated from the people of Tal,Afar and only travels through Tal,Afar a few times annually.

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ZUMAR MAY GO TO KRG, BUT TURCOMAN FOCUS IS KIRKUK  
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15. (C) When questioned about possibly joining the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in a possible upcoming Article 140 disputed territories referendum, Mahmoud immediately began prepared remarks about implications for Kirkuk. When he was asked to restrict his comments to Ninewa, Mahmoud noted that the primary concern for Turcomans was Kirkuk. Mahmoud did say that Zumar, a subdistrict of Tal,Afar district that is primarily Arab, would probably vote to join the KRG. He also commented on attempts by the KRG to influence Christian areas on the Ninewa plain; he said that the offer of an autonomous region is merely a bribe to elicit support for the KRG. Mahmoud continued by arguing that the Shabak in Ninewa are confused and that they are not really Kurds. He said that the Kurds, &ambition is beyond its limitations8 and cited several examples of personal harassment by Kurdish authorities. Shih claims that more than 1000 Turcomans are being illegally detained in the KRG.

16. (C) Mahmoud did note that Kurdish schools have recently been constructed in Zumar. These schools teach in both Arabic and in Kurdish, according to Shih. Shih said that both Arabic and Turcoman are taught in the schools in Tal,Afar, although he noted that the language that is

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actually taught is closer to Turkish than Turcoman, since the Roman alphabet is used.

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TURKEY NOT A FACTOR  
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17. (C) When queried about ITF,s relationship with the GOT, Hussin interrupted and claimed that all of the members of ITF are Iraqi and that ITF has nothing to do with the GOT. Shih disclosed that many Turcoman receive support through private Turkish charities and from individual Turkish citizens, but he also said that there was no official GOT support. Mahmoud then noted that ITF received some support, in the form of medical supplies, from Germany and reiterated that his party simply wants a good relationship with everyone, except the Kurds.

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) ITF,s frank views that were expressed correlate well with what other interlocutors report on Turcomans in Tal,Afar. The situation in Tal,Afar remains complicated and difficult as sectarian issues continue to dominate the political landscape. Increased Kurdish meddling will likely lead to further destabilization of the precarious balance in Tal,Afar. The primary concern in Tal,Afar, however, is still Shi,a and Sunni tension within the government, security forces, and population. END COMMENT.  
KHALILZAD